

To the Publisher of *National Review*:

In his article, “The Reality of RFK Jr.,” Pradheep J. Shanker argues that my years of supposedly deceiving the public about vaccine safety and efficacy should disqualify me from support by readers of the *National Review* and other conservatives. Shanker’s article is a mélange of factual errors interspersed with name-calling.

Shanker describes me as a “charlatan” who “lied about the science,” and as “a grifter who has no conscience or shame” who “has gone out of his way to lie about science in order to benefit himself.” Elsewhere, I am a lifelong “fraudster, out to benefit only his own interests.” Shanker explains that these descriptions of me are “**undeniable**” and concludes that “[t]he fact that Kennedy may have been right in some criticisms of pandemic policies doesn’t excuse the person he has been for most of his adult life: a man willing to lie to enrich and elevate himself. This is an incontrovertible reality....”

As proof of these defamations, Shanker offers charges that he seems to have entirely lifted — without attribution — from Seth Mnookin’s shoddily researched and error-filled 2011 book *The Panic Virus: The True Story Behind the Vaccine Autism Controversy*. That work is a lengthy recitation of Pharma/CDC patently erroneous talking points, devoid of serious scientific analysis. Mnookin simply insists that thimerosal — a highly neurotoxic mercury-based vaccine preservative that I have critiqued — is safe, and then engages in an overheated and venomous pop-psychological screed against vaccine safety advocates. Shanker amplifies Mnookin’s criticism with his own additional distortions.

Following Mnookin, Shanker focuses on an interview I gave with Joe Scarborough during which, Shanker says, I made numerous erroneous assertions. But Shanker’s description of the incident is itself a ragbag of inaccuracies.

1. **“In 2011, days after *Rolling Stone* retracted his 2005 article, Kennedy appeared on MSNBC’s *Morning Joe*... ‘We are injecting our children with 400 times the amount of mercury that FDA or EPA considers safe.’”**

For starters, *Rolling Stone* did not retract my article in 2011. The magazine removed my piece from its archives during the pandemic, in 2020 — fifteen years after the original publication — following the arrival of a new editor, [Noah Shachtman](#), who has strong ties to the intelligence community.¹ At that time, the [National Security Council was managing Operation Warp Speed](#).²

Furthermore, the interview Shanker describes was not in 2011, but in **2005**. Shanker provides a link to a 2011 TV discussion, but it is for a different interview six years later, on another TV show (the 2005 interview was on *Scarborough Country*, not *Morning Joe*), on another topic (Big Oil), having nothing to do with vaccines. Such errors — wrong facts, wrong link, wrong year, wrong subject, wrong show — are typical of Shanker’s sloppy research, his disregard for fact-checking, and his casual relationship with the truth.

¹ Dick Russell, “Part 2: The Belly of The Daily Beast and Its Perceptible Ties to the CIA,” *The Defender*, Dec. 19, 2021, <https://childrenshealthdefense.org/defender/the-daily-beast-ties-to-cia/>.

² Armed Forces Press, “Breaking: DOD Controlled COVID ‘Vaccines’ from the Start Under National Security Program – Lied the Entire Time – Were NEVER ‘Safe and Effective,’” Jan. 5, 2023, <https://armedforces.press/breaking-dod-controlled-covid-vaccines-from-the-start-under-national-security-program-lied-the-entire-time-were-never-safe-and-effective/>.

2. Shanker wrote that “Kennedy stated that [beginning in 1989] children were being given 24 vaccines, and that each one of them had thimerosal or mercury in them. This was a clear lie.”

In fact, during that time period, the following childhood vaccines **contained thimerosal**: multidose influenza vaccines (18 doses), diphtheria-tetanus-acellular pertussis vaccines (4 doses), *Haemophilus influenzae* type b (Hib) vaccines (4 doses), and hepatitis B vaccines (3 doses). The total number of Thimerosal-containing vaccines recommended for children up to age 18 was therefore 29.

3. Shanker further states that “[b]y 2001, no vaccines given to children in the United States contained thimerosal.”

That assertion is also false. Although the U.S. Public Health Services [recommended the removal of thimerosal](#) from childhood vaccines in 1999,³ the FDA allowed manufacturers to continue to market existing stocks, so thimerosal was not removed from most jabs [until 2003](#).⁴ That year, for the first time, CDC recommended flu vaccines for every child in every year of life and pregnant women in any trimester. Thimerosal remains in multi-dose flu vaccines, which, in 2003, accounted for over 80% of available jabs. The multi-dose flu vaccines contain a 25 mcg “bolus dose,” so children receiving annual shots could receive cumulative amounts of mercury comparable to amounts children received from all recommended vaccines prior to 2003. Furthermore, early development fetuses could suffer dose-to-body-weight exposures far higher

³ “Understanding Thimerosal, Mercury, and Vaccine Safety,” CDC, Jan. 2011, <https://www.cdc.gov/vaccines/hcp/patient-ed/conversations/downloads/vacsafe-thimerosal-color-office.pdf>.

⁴ “Understanding Thimerosal, Mercury, and Vaccine Safety,” CDC, Feb. 2013, <https://www.cdc.gov/vaccines/hcp/patient-ed/conversations/downloads/vacsafe-thimerosal-bw-office.pdf>.

than any children prior to 2003. Anecdotal evidence suggests that mercury-laden flu vaccines are mainly used in clinics in poor and minority neighborhoods.

Although the manufacturers discontinued the use of thimerosal in other routinely recommended childhood vaccines, they continued the use of aluminum as an adjuvant, which is also a neurotoxin capable of inflicting similar types of neurological damage. Toxicologists have known for a long time that “[co-exposure](#) to multiple metals [mercury and aluminum] can result in increased neurotoxicity compared to single-metal exposure, in particular during early life.”⁵

4. Shanker falsely claims that “[a]n epidemic of diseases such as chicken pox and measles, many of which were thought to be almost extinct, came about as kids across the world were not kept up to date on their vaccine schedules.”

In fact, prior to the COVID lockdowns, the vaccination rates for these childhood illnesses have steadily increased since the 1990s.^{6,7,8,9}

⁵ Sanders et al., “Perinatal and Childhood Exposure to Cadmium, Manganese, and Metal Mixtures and Effects on Cognition and Behavior: A Review of Recent Literature,” *Curr Environ Health Rep.* 2015 Sep;2(3):284–94. doi: [10.1007/s40572-015-0058-8](https://doi.org/10.1007/s40572-015-0058-8). PMID: 26231505.

⁶ José F. Cordero et al., “National, State, and Urban Area Vaccination Coverage Levels Among Children Aged 19–35 Months --- United States, 1998,” *Centers for Disease Control and Prevention Morbidity and Mortality Weekly Report (MMWR)*, Sep. 22, 2000, <https://www.cdc.gov/mmwr/preview/mmwrhtml/ss4909a1.htm>.

⁷ Rane Seither et al., “Vaccination Coverage Among Children in Kindergarten — United States, 2014–15 School Year,” *Centers for Disease Control and Prevention Morbidity and Mortality Weekly Report (MMWR)*, Aug. 18, 2015, <https://www.cdc.gov/mmwr/preview/mmwrhtml/mm6433a2.htm>.

⁸ Holly A. Hill et al., “Vaccination Coverage by Age 24 Months Among Children Born During 2018–2019 — National Immunization Survey–Child, United States, 2019–2021,” *Centers for Disease Control and Prevention Morbidity and Mortality Weekly Report (MMWR)*, Jan. 13, 2023, [https://www.cdc.gov/mmwr/volumes/72/wr/mm7202a3.htm#:~:text=Among%20children%20born%20during%202018%E2%80%932021%2C%20vaccination%20coverage%20by%20age,dose%20of%20VAR%20\(91.1%25\)](https://www.cdc.gov/mmwr/volumes/72/wr/mm7202a3.htm#:~:text=Among%20children%20born%20during%202018%E2%80%932021%2C%20vaccination%20coverage%20by%20age,dose%20of%20VAR%20(91.1%25)).

⁹ “Table VaxCh. Vaccination coverage for selected diseases by age 24 months, by race and Hispanic origin, poverty level, and location of residence: United States, birth years 2010–2016,” CDC, <https://www.cdc.gov/nchs/data/hus/2020-2021/VaxCh.pdf>.

- 5. Shanker says that “[i]n 2005, [Kennedy] wrote an editorial, published in both *Rolling Stone* and *Salon*, alleging a massive conspiracy regarding thimerosal, a mercury-based preservative that had long since been removed from most childhood vaccines.”**

My award-winning article was no editorial. I published the transcripts of a secret meeting in which regulatory officials and vaccine makers discussed plans to hide the results of an internal CDC study of the government’s largest vaccine and health claims database. Those officials became alarmed when their data showed that Thimerosal-containing hepatitis B vaccines had an elevated risk for autism of 1,135%. Neither CDC, NIH, FDA, nor any of the [51 attendees](#)¹⁰ of the meeting have ever disputed the accuracy or authenticity of that transcript. Anyone may now read that [transcript](#),¹¹ which CHD has posted in full on its website.

Mnookin devotes an incoherent chapter to criticizing me in *The Panic Virus*. Mainly, he claims I used quotes from the Simpsonwood transcript out of context, but the quotes he cites do not support that contention. As I pointed out earlier, anyone can now read the full transcript of the two-day Simpsonwood meeting online and verify that the shocking and immoral conniving by its participants was at least as bad as I represented.

- 6. Shanker wrote of my *Salon/Rolling Stone* article: “In his piece, Kennedy completely ignored all immunization-safety reviews of thimerosal. He ignored numerous Centers for Disease Control and Prevention reviews that had already taken place.”**

¹⁰ “Vaccine Safety: Timeline: Thimerosal in Vaccines (1999-2010),” CDC, Aug. 19, 2020, <https://www.cdc.gov/vaccinesafety/concerns/thimerosal/timeline.html#>.

¹¹ “Scientific Review of Vaccine Safety Datalink Information, June 7-8, 2000, Simpsonwood Retreat Center Norcross, Georgia,” accessed May 31, 2023, <https://childrenshealthdefense.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/10/The-Simpsonwood-Documents.pdf>.

I did not ignore the immunization safety reviews of thimerosal conducted by the Institute of Medicine (IOM). In fact, my article includes a deep dive into those studies and into the initial [report on thimerosal by the IOM in 2001](#) where the committee found it “biologically plausible” that thimerosal exposure from vaccines could cause neurodevelopmental disorders,¹² and recommended a wide range of basic science, clinical, and epidemiological research that was never conducted before the rushed and [heavily orchestrated 2004 IOM report](#).¹³ I also reviewed the [leaked transcript](#) from the IOM Immunization Safety Review Committee internal deliberations,¹⁴ which confirm that the IOM preconceived its 2004 conclusions prior to conducting any research.

7. “RFK [sic] has repeatedly distorted facts that turned out to be wrong during the pandemic as well... based on misunderstanding of the U.S. VAERS (Vaccine Adverse Events Reporting System) data. He went so far as to call the Covid-19 vaccine the deadliest vaccine ever made.... The vast majority of events [reported to VAERS] are not related to the vaccines at all.”

My statement that VAERS (and other) data suggests that COVID vaccines are the deadliest in history is correct. VAERS recorded reports of [17,481 deaths](#)¹⁵ and [just under 1 million injuries](#)¹⁶

¹² Kathleen Stratton, A. Gable, Marie McCormick, editors, “Immunization Safety Review: Thimerosal-Containing Vaccines and Neurodevelopmental Disorders,” *Institute of Medicine, Immunization Safety Review Committee*, (National Academies Press, Washington, DC), 2001, <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/books/NBK223724/>.

¹³ Institute of Medicine, “Immunization Safety Review: Vaccines and Autism,” (Washington, DC: The National Academies Press), 2004, <https://doi.org/10.17226/10997>, <https://nap.nationalacademies.org/catalog/10997/immunization-safety-review-vaccines-and-autism>.

¹⁴ “National Academy of Sciences Institute of Medicine, Immunization Safety Review Committee Closed Session,” IOM/ISR, Jan. 12, 2001, <https://childrenshealthdefense.org/wp-content/uploads/IOM-Closed-Door-Session-Transcript-1.pdf>.

¹⁵ “Found 17,481 cases where Location is U.S., Territories, or Unknown and Vaccine targets COVID-19 (COVID19 or COVID19-2) and Patient Died,” *MedAlerts*, May 19, 2023, [https://medalerts.org/vaersdb/findfield.php?TABLE=ON&GROUP1=AGE&EVENTS=ON&VAX\[\]=COVID19&VAX\[\]=COVID19-2&VAXTYPES=COVID-19&DIED=Yes&STATE=NOTER](https://medalerts.org/vaersdb/findfield.php?TABLE=ON&GROUP1=AGE&EVENTS=ON&VAX[]=COVID19&VAX[]=COVID19-2&VAXTYPES=COVID-19&DIED=Yes&STATE=NOTER).

¹⁶ “Found 961,869 cases where Location is U.S., Territories, or Unknown and Vaccine targets COVID-19 (COVID19 or COVID19-2),” *MedAlerts*, May 19, 2023,

following COVID vaccines — more fatalities and injuries than for all the billions of doses of 16 other recommended vaccines combined over the 36 previous years. CDC’s own study of VAERS suggests that vaccine injuries are [UNDERREPORTED BY OVER 100x](#),¹⁷ not OVERREPORTED as Shanker suggests. Both CDC’s V-safe data and a 2023 Rasmussen poll suggest that 15 million Americans suffered injuries grave enough to seek medical attention after COVID vaccination. Compare these figures to the 1976 swine flu vaccine, which regulators pulled after [25 deaths were reported](#) globally.¹⁸

8. Shanker claims that my concerns about thimerosal were rooted in Dr. Andrew Wakefield’s 1998 article in *The Lancet* (subsequently retracted).

That is inaccurate. Wakefield and his twelve prominent coauthors reported evidence that the MMR vaccine was triggering autism in children they examined. The MMR vaccine never contained thimerosal, which was always the primary focus of my research. I explain how I was reluctantly introduced to this subject in my 2005 *Rolling Stone* article, “Deadly Immunity” — and it had nothing to do with Dr. Wakefield:

“I was drawn into the controversy only reluctantly. As an attorney and environmentalist who has spent years working on issues of mercury toxicity, I frequently met mothers of autistic children who were absolutely convinced that their kids had been injured by vaccines. Privately, I was skeptical.... *It was only after reading the Simpsonwood*

[https://medalerts.org/vaersdb/findfield.php?TABLE=ON&GROUP1=AGE&EVENTS=ON&VAX\[\]=COVID19&VAX\[\]=COVID19-2&VAXTYPES=COVID-19&STATE=NOTFR](https://medalerts.org/vaersdb/findfield.php?TABLE=ON&GROUP1=AGE&EVENTS=ON&VAX[]=COVID19&VAX[]=COVID19-2&VAXTYPES=COVID-19&STATE=NOTFR).

¹⁷ Ross Lazarus, “Electronic Support for Public Health–Vaccine Adverse Event Reporting System (ESP:VAERS),” The Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality (AHRQ) U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, 2020, <https://digital.ahrq.gov/sites/default/files/docs/publication/r18hs017045-lazarus-final-report-2011.pdf>.

¹⁸ Abbie Boudreau and Scott Zamost, “Ex-CDC head recalls ’76 swine flu outbreak,” *CNN*, <https://edition.cnn.com/2009/HEALTH/04/30/swine.flu.1976/index.html>.

transcripts, studying the leading scientific research and talking with many of the nation's pre-eminent authorities on mercury that I became convinced that the link between thimerosal and the epidemic of childhood neurological disorders is real.” [emphasis added]

- 9. Shanker wrote: “Starting in the early 2000s, Kennedy used his position as a prominent environmental lawyer to attempt to initiate class-action lawsuits against pharmaceutical companies that produced vaccines.”**

This is untrue. I **never** initiated a class-action lawsuit against pharmaceutical companies related to vaccines. And to suggest that I undertook this issue to make money is laughable. My income was negatively impacted by my advocacy work, and by being mislabeled an “anti-vaxxer.” It was, in fact, the worst career decision of my lifetime.

- 10. Shanker says that “[RFK Jr.] based his opinions on... two scientists (Dr. Mark Geier and David Geier) — the only two at the time who claimed to have data supporting the thimerosal claim.... These two charlatans were the basis for all of Kennedy’s vaccine claims and remain the sole basis for his claims to this very day.”**

This allegation is patently **false**. The etiology of this statement suggests purposeful deception by Shanker.

First, in my 2005 interview with Scarborough — which Shanker cites — I specifically said that I reached my opinion after reading “hundreds and hundreds of studies,” which I had by then listed on my websites — as well as the extensive conversations I had with leading scientists and federal health regulators. In 2014, I published a comprehensive digest of these and other studies in a

book, *Thimerosal: Let The Science Speak*, which I wrote with Dr. Martha Herbert of the Harvard Medical School and fifteen-time *New York Times* bestseller Dr. Mark Hyman. That book summarizes some 450 studies and offers over 1,400 references supporting my position on the dangers of thimerosal in vaccines.

Shanker seems to have constructed his assertion that the Geiers were the only two scientists upon whom I based my opinion by distorting a passage he lifted from Seth Mnookin. [Mnookin wrote](#):

“He [Kennedy] also studied the work of the ‘only two scientists’ who had managed to gain access to government data on the safety of vaccines: Dr. Mark Geier, a frequent paid witness in lawsuits alleging harm done by vaccines, and his son, David.”¹⁹

Shanker, in his rendering, removed the word “also” — which Mnookin included to acknowledge that I had other sources of evidence. Shanker then further bowdlerized the lifted Mnookin passage by deceptively altering Mnookin’s observation that the Geiers were the only two scientists who had “managed to gain access” to the government’s vaccine safety database.

Compare Shanker’s rendering to Mnookin’s:

“He based his opinions on those of two scientists — the only two at the time who claimed to have data supporting the thimerosal claim.”

This seems to be further evidence of deliberate distortion by Mr. Shanker, and intent to smear me rather than report truthfully. Shanker has altered Mnookin’s statement to suggest that the Geiers were the only two scientists in the world making the argument that thimerosal is dangerous.

¹⁹ Seth Mnookin, “How Robert F. Kennedy, Jr., Distorted Vaccine Science,” *Scientific American*, Jan. 11, 2017, <https://www.scientificamerican.com/article/how-robert-f-kennedy-jr-distorted-vaccine-science1>.

11. Shanker points out that “[i]n 2011, after many years of evidence and data accumulating, both *Rolling Stone* and *Salon* retracted Kennedy’s article, deleting it completely from their archives. Kennedy, to his everlasting shame, has not held himself to the same standard....”

Mr. Shanker nowhere acknowledges my published response to *Salon*’s retraction. Here is an excerpt from that response to my article:

“During the firestorm following publication, pharma flaks and government health agencies bombarded *Salon* and *Rolling Stone* with furious letters and put the article under unprecedented scrutiny. *Salon* and *Rolling Stone* corrected six minor errors. None of those errors were even remotely material to the article’s central propositions. Four were minor clarifications or corrections of inadvertent editing or punctuation errors, and one was a wrong name applied to a congressional staffer. The only error to rise above the level of trivial nitpicking was the assertion that a six-month-old infant could receive a level of mercury from vaccines that was ‘187 times greater than the EPA’s limit for daily exposure to methylmercury, a related neurotoxin.’ As the email record exchanges with editors from the time period confirm, that error, along with most of the others, was made by *Rolling Stone* and *Salon* editors as they cut my 16,000 word submission to 4,700 words. In the days after the publication of the correction in both *Rolling Stone* and *Salon*, editor Joan Walsh apologized to me, in writing, for introducing those errors themselves. By the time *Salon* retracted my article six years later, its editor had apparently forgotten *Salon*’s role in creating the errors.”

(On June 8, 2005, *Rolling Stone* and *Salon* editors wrote to my research assistant, Brendan DeMelle, to apologize for errors that they had introduced into the copy during the editing phase. “Some of these errors were ones we introduced, not Bobby,” a *Rolling Stone* editor said. The *Salon* editor who worked on the piece extensively, Joan Walsh, repeated the apology and added further explanation to my staff: “some of these are OUR errors, not his. But in terms of PR and knowing why we changed things, I think this is helpful for him — can you make sure he sees it?”)

“Six years later, *Salon* precipitously took down the piece on Sunday, January 16, 2011, during the Martin Luther King Jr. holiday weekend. My only prior warning was an email from *Salon*’s new editor, Kerry Lauerman, whom I had never met, sent the night before. In that email, Lauerman explained that *Salon* was timing its retraction of my article to accompany the launch of *Panic Virus*, a new pro-thimerosal book by *Salon*’s in-house essayist, Seth Mnookin. Lauerman’s letter informed me that the retraction of my piece would accompany *Salon*’s publication of an interview with Mnookin at noon the following day. In his introduction to that interview, Lauerman described Mnookin as a personal friend “and a friend of *Salon*’s.” Lauerman refused to take my calls protesting the retraction.

In a published note explaining the retraction, *Salon*’s editor-at-large, Joan Walsh, never mentioned any new errors that *Salon* may have found in my piece. Nor does she cite any scientific studies. Instead, she parrots CDC’s talking points that thimerosal is safe, citing “continued revelations of the flaws and even fraud tainting the science” linking thimerosal to neurological disorders. That vague proclamation serves as *Salon*’s official rationale for defenestrating my article. Walsh dutifully promised, in the future, to exercise “critical pursuit of

others who continue to propagate the debunked, and dangerous, autism-vaccine link.” Although she did not then acknowledge it, it seems that Walsh remained aware of her personal role in creating the original errors. A careful reading of Walsh’s statement shows that *Salon* did not attribute fraud to me.

Neither Lauerman nor anyone else at *Salon* ever cited a factual error that caused *Salon* to remove my piece. And despite my requests, the publication has never provided me with the specific mistakes that led its editors to take this extreme measure.

As I point out above, *Rolling Stone* did not then retract my piece. After reviewing *Salon*’s strange explanations, mystified *Rolling Stone* editors elected to not remove my piece. *Rolling Stone* declared that it continued to stand by the article. When its new editor, Noah Schachtman, finally retracted my piece from *Rolling Stone*’s archive in 2020 during the pandemic, *Rolling Stone* could not point to any errors in the piece that promoted its decision.

Salon’s founder and former editor-in-chief, David Talbot, was likewise baffled and dismayed by *Salon*’s actions. Talbot condemned *Salon* for caving in to pressure from the pharmaceutical industry. He explained his reaction in a letter to me on April 6, 2015:

“I know enough about the debate — and about the pharmaceutical industry’s general track record on putting profits before people, as well as the compromised nature of regulatory oversight in this country when it comes to powerful industries — to know that ‘disappearing’ your article was not the proper decision... Removing your article from the *Salon* archives was a violation of that spirit and smacks of editorial cowardice.”

END